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Liberty

NOT THE DAUGHTER BUT THE MOTHER OF ORDER — PROUDHON

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"For always in thine eyes, O Liberty!
Shines that high light whereby the world is saved;
And though thou slay us, we will trust in thee."
JOHN HAY.

On Picket Duty.

Hugh O. Pentecost has been indicted by the grand jury for grand larceny in the first degree.

I have once more in stock the pamphlet, "Love, Marriage, and Divorce," by Greeley, James, and Andrews.

Judge Barrett, the author of the aristocratic jury plan, said to Inspector McLaughlin, while passing sentence, that he should not, at that time, add to his humiliation by a single harsh expression. How magnanimous! Where did Judge Barrett get the authority to use harsh expressions to convicted men? As Howard observes, "some men imagine that lectures and sentences are synonymous." Judge Barrett ought to devote some attention to reforming the manners of the judges.

I am in receipt of a letter from Mr. Arthur Kitson, in which he meets by a flat and circumstantial denial the claim of Mr. William A. Whittick, made in the latter's letter in the last issue of Liberty, that the credit given to Mr. Whittick in the preface to Mr. Kitson's book does not adequately express the degree of his collaboration, and sets up a counter-claim that this credit does Mr. Whittick more than justice and that Mr. Whittick has more than once admitted and asserted this. Since the letter cannot be printed in full before the issue of August 10, I print this paragraph to inform the readers that Mr. Kitson does not accept Mr. Whittick's statement.

Because Governor Altgeld has called a special session of the legislature to do some of the work which that worthy body neglected during the regular session, the venomous Chicago "Journal" and the atrocious New York "Evening Post" are insinuating that he must be "insane." Evidently the trick of denouncing him as an Anarchist is played out, and something more terrifying is needed. But really, Godkin is becoming altogether too reckless in his lying. Those who see the Chicago papers know that, when he says that the special session "is universally pronounced unnecessary and unjustifiable," he lies either wantonly or ignorantly. All that his bitterest enemies have to say against his act is that it was somewhat premature, — that he should have waited until September; the necessity of the extra session *no one* has questioned.

Dana is growing incoherent. When the supreme court, by a majority of one, saved the plutocracy from the income-tax, he threw his sensible readers into convulsions by the Quixotic declaration that the court stood "like a rock" in its championship of liberty and equality. Now he tells us that the decision of Judge Brown declining to order his removal to Washington for trial on a charge of libel is a glorious victory for a free press and individual rights, when, as a matter of fact, it was as technical a decision as was ever rendered. The indictment was technically defective, and the statutes under which the removal was attempted had been held, in a number of cases, to have no application to libel. Decisions on such grounds have never been hailed as great victories for general liberty, and Dana's inept congratulations constitute a sad sign of mental decay. His sense of congruity and appropriateness is disappearing, and his bad breaks are painfully frequent.

The law in regard to debt discriminates in favor of women. Creditors can have "body execution" against men, but they cannot seize the body of a woman for debt. In view of this inequality, suggestions have been made looking to the abolition of the privilege enjoyed by women, but the New York "World" protests against any change in that direction. The remedy, it says, lies in extending the exemption to men, not in taking it away from women. Assuming that imprisonment for debt in any form is undesirable, the "World" is clearly right. The point which all clamorers for the equality of women should ponder is that there are, in every case, two ways of securing equality, and that it is necessary to know which way is the right one. The justice of woman suffrage, for example, is not demonstrated by pointing to man suffrage, for it is possible to secure equality by depriving men of it as well as by bestowing it on women. Will the more intelligent of the woman-suffragists ever understand that the first task is to prove that majority rule through the suffrage is desirable?

Nym Crinkle, the New York "World's" critic, finds fault with George Bernard Shaw for drawing comparisons between Sarah Bernhardt and Eleonora Duse, and calls him the most eccentric of English critics. The wise Nym thinks that these two actresses "do not belong to the same realm of art any more than do Hugo and Pascal." Seeing that they produce the same plays and appear in the same parts before the same audiences almost, it would seem that comparisons are not only legitimate, but inevitable, and the critic who should fail to comment on the differences of their methods and conceptions would *ipso facto* write himself down an incompetent usurper of the critic's function. But Nym's chief objection to Shaw is that he has neither the time or the liberal education which are requisite for the due comprehension of the two actresses referred to. The impudence and coolness of this scribe are simply stupefying. Only an all-around ignoramus is capable of such recklessness. Does Nym imagine that the "Saturday Review" employs men of his own calibre?

There are two classes of fools in the world, — the ordinary fools and the pseudo-scientific fools. About the former few sensible men trouble themselves, but the latter are capable of serious mischief and constantly need watching. Spencer states in a recent letter that he is greatly irritated by the assertion that his views sanction State Socialism. Such assertions, it is needless to say, emanate, not from ordinary fools, but from pseudo-scientific fools. Spencer alludes to the pretentious nonsense of that Italian scientific Marxite, Professor Enrico Ferri, whose book on "Socialism and Modern Science" has unfortunately attracted some attention. I learn from a review in the "Open Court" that Ferri's book is "an eloquent and brilliant exposition of the trend of modern biological and social science as initiated by Darwin and Spencer and culminating in the Socialistic theories" of Marx. The reviewer continues: "The doctrine of Karl Marx, Professor Ferri contends, is the only Socialistic theory which possesses scientific method and importance, and which unanimously guides and inspires the Socialistic parties of the whole world. In his opinion, it is nothing more or less than the practical and natural fruitage in the province of sociology of that scientific revolution which began with the renaissance of modern science in Galileo and has received its highest modern perfection in the works of Darwin and Spencer. The last-mentioned authors hesitated to draw the sociological conclusions which logically flowed from their scientific premises, but left that work to Marx, who with them forms the brilliant stellar triad of modern scientific thought. In Socialism, as reared upon the scientific foundations of Marx, the world shall surely find, our author thinks, a panacea for the evils which now threaten what is noblest and best in its life. It cannot be denied that the little book is written with fervor and understanding." Such ignorance, both in author and reviewer, is simply paralyzing. It is obviously useless to protest and argue against such stupid perversion of fact, for what ground is there for believing that your protests will be less idiotically treated than your original expositions? No, against the learned fools there is no protection. The minimum of irritation lies in ignoring them.

Liberty.

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"In abolishing rent and interest, the last vestiges of old-time slavery, the Revolution abolishes at one stroke the sword of the executioner, the seal of the magistrate, the club of the policeman, the gauge of the exciseman, the erasing-knife of the department clerk, all those insignia of Politics, which young Liberty grinds beneath her heel." — PROUDHON.

☞ The appearance in the editorial column of articles over other signatures than the editor's initial indicates that the editor approves their central purpose and general tenor, though he does not hold himself responsible for every phrase or word. But the appearance in other parts of the paper of articles by the same or other writers by no means indicates that he disapproves them in any respect, such disposition of them being governed largely by motives of convenience.

A "Liberal" Comstock.

It is not agreeable to pass harsh judgment upon opinions uttered by a friend, especially so good a friend of Liberty and its editor as Dr. E. B. Foote, Jr., has been and is; but, since he forces upon my notice his view of the State's attitude toward Oscar Wilde, I do not see that I can well avoid the necessity of saying that the letter from him which is printed in another column seems to me the most intolerant, fanatical, and altogether barbarous utterance that has come from a professed ultra-liberal since I have been engaged in reformatory work. Even were the claim made out that Oscar Wilde has been guilty of invasive conduct, the mere expression of the wish that he were to spend twenty years, instead of two, at treadmill service or at oakum picking, would still betray such an inability to distinguish between the varying degrees of interference with liberty as is generally due to the fanatic's hatred of sin rather than to the sane man's desire to protect against crime. To exhibit ferocity in this degree a man must be as ready to punish for indirectly and theoretically harmful consequences as was the Catholic Church when it burned men at the stake for what it considered the most pernicious of all practices, — the teaching of heresy.

But the claim of invasive conduct is not made out. In the first place, I believe Dr. Foote to be entirely mistaken in his conception of the crime of which Wilde was convicted. I have nowhere seen it stated that he was tried for "seducing others to his evil ways." It is true that the absurdly squeamish public opinion which has forced upon a press that usually shrinks from filth only when it sees no money in it a certain degree of circumspection in its accounts of this affair has left us all a good deal in the dark, not only as to the seduction, but as to the "evil ways" themselves. Still it is my understanding that Wilde was found guilty of illegal practices, not of inducing others to participate in them. This view is borne out by the remark of the foreman of the jury, made in the court-room, that, if Wilde was guilty of the charge preferred against him, then Lord Alfred Douglas was guilty also. Such a remark conveys the idea that the charge was not seduction, for the law does not consider mutual seduction a possibility in such a case. If any of my English comrades can inform me definitely what the charge was, I would be glad to have him do so. Meanwhile, unless Dr. Foote can show that the charge was seduction, I adhere to my view that seduction did not enter into the case, even legally; and, if this be so, then Dr. Foote's entire argument falls to the ground. For he seems to admit, though with numerous "ifs" and "buts" and an evident reluctance that is significant of the authoritarian spirit within him, that mature and responsible persons who simply "revel in their own debasement" are entitled to be let alone.

In the second place, supposing the charge to have been seduction and the facts to have been as claimed by the prosecution, the indictment, in a court of equal liberty instead of ordinary law, would have been promptly dismissed on the ground that the alleged victims (not only Lord Douglas, but the others) were themselves mature and responsible persons and, as such, incapable of any seduction of which justice can properly take cognizance. Will Dr. Foote maintain that there is anything sacred and God-appointed about the age of twenty-one which certain men have undertaken to fix as the age of maturity and responsibility? In the eyes of an Anarchist every person is mature and responsible who can assert and maintain his self-sovereignty. Every such person has a right to do as he chooses, provided his conduct is non-invasive; and no one can rightfully be punished for persuading such a person to perform an act not in itself invasive and punishable. All of Oscar Wilde's associates, so far as known, were in this sense mature and responsible, and therefore it is entirely unjust to charge him with seducing them. Dr. Foote, in treating these persons as irresponsible minors, is simply paralleling the absurd and outrageous agitation of the "Arena" people for a high-age-of-consent *régime*. He desires to force upon boys, as they desire to force upon girls, a condition of infancy unnaturally prolonged, — and with even less excuse, because under present conditions boys are able to assert and maintain their self-sovereignty at an earlier age than girls. This being the diagnosis of Dr. Foote's case, I am not the proper party to attend to it. I commend him to the attention of Mrs. Lillian Harman.

Dr. Foote is not an Anarchist, and has never claimed to be one; though not adhering consistently to any political philosophy, for some years he has seemed to me State Socialistic in his tendencies. But I did suppose that he had arrived at a degree of understanding of what Anarchism means. I now see, however, that equal liberty is a complete mystery to him. This is shown conclusively by the following sentence: "If the State have no function in this matter, it will also have to let alone the marquis who uses a gun against his son's 'uncle.'" It is obvious that Dr. Foote here uses the word State not in accordance with the Anarchistic definition, but as covering voluntary association for defence; and his declaration, then, is that, if associated citizens may not punish Oscar Wilde, then the Marquis of Queensberry may. Now, it directly follows from the doctrine of equal liberty that what one individual may rightfully do a number of individuals voluntarily associated may rightfully do, and, conversely, that whatever such associated individuals may not rightfully do, no one of them may rightfully do. Applying this to the case in point, we see that, if the Marquis of Queensberry is entitled to punish Oscar Wilde, then the community of which the marquis is a member is equally entitled so to do; and that, if the community has no such right, then neither has the marquis. Assuming that Oscar Wilde is not an invader, it would be incumbent upon the defensive association to punish any one, even the Marquis of Queensberry, who should assume to treat him as such. How absurd is Dr. Foote's misconception of Anarchism when he declares that it must allow an individual to assault a non-invader!

The question of Oscar Wilde's sanity I do not propose to discuss, though I will allow myself the remark that, comparing Wilde's writings with Dr. Foote's present letter, I find Dr. Foote the less sane of the two. But we have no occasion to consider the matter of sanity. All non-invasive persons are entitled to be let alone, whether sane or insane. The question of sanity arises only after invasion has been established, and it arises then only to determine the manner in which the invader shall be treated.

The claim that there is no possibility of useful life on the part of Wilde after he comes out of prison (putting aside, of course, the fact that the imprisonment itself may cripple him forever) is best met by the statement that, even if everything alleged against Wilde be true, he has been from the beginning of his career one of the most useful of men. Not only are his writings a permanent addition to the world's literature that cannot be offset by his personal vices, but even his enemies admit that he has been perhaps the most influential factor in the achievement of that immense advance in decorative art which England and America have witnessed in the last decade. Now, unless it be true, as some foolish persons think, that art is a matter of little or no importance, Wilde has here contributed to the world's welfare a great, broad, far-reaching, and long-enduring force beside which the influence of his personal habits, however objectionable, must appear only as dust in the balance. If Wilde's two sons, "who look like him," turn out to be really like him, I think he will be forgiven for fathering them. The impertinence of authoritarianism reaches its climax in this proposition of the Foote family, father and son, that the State shall decide who may procreate. Moreover, it tends to verify my prophecy, in "State Socialism and Anarchism," regarding the culmination of governmentalism.

Answering now the questions put to me in Dr. Foote's concluding paragraph, I will say that, if the "little girls" seduced by the librarian in Prospect Park were as big as those "boy" victims of Oscar Wilde, whose cases Dr. Foote finds so interesting, then the persons who "caught" the librarian ought to be deprived of their liberty for a period long enough to enable them to learn what equal liberty means; that, if, on the other hand, the girls had not reached an age of responsibility (as defined above), a similar deprivation of liberty should be inflicted upon the librarian; and that

Jack-the-Ripper should be treated precisely as any other murderer. Upon the "varied assortment of sexual perverts" ranging between the librarian and Jack-the-Ripper I must decline to pass in a lump. Simple sexual perversion is not a crime, and I refuse to sentence any sexual pervert until I know precisely what he has done.

And now, if I may apply the *argumentum ad hominem*, let me ask Dr. Foote, Jr., if he is aware that his own father, Dr. Foote, Sr., by the unorthodox attitudes that he has taken in his public and medical career (and I refer to them for my part only to his credit), has "so conducted himself as to give his sons a public stamp of opprobrium"? If his sons are so sensible as to accept this stamp as an honor rather than a shame, the fact is accidental; perhaps, too, Oscar Wilde's sons may not be ashamed of their father. Of course, I must not be misunderstood as instituting any intrinsic analogy between the course of Dr. Foote, Sr., and the acts of Oscar Wilde, but the necessities of the argument justify me in reminding Dr. Foote, Jr., that, in the eyes of the public, to be convicted by Comstock is scarcely a less disgrace than that which has fallen upon Oscar Wilde, and that, if to bring opprobrium on one's family is in itself a crime, then Oscar Wilde and Dr. Foote, Sr., are alike criminals. It is within my knowledge that there are not a few people in this community (some of them radicals, too) who look upon Dr. Foote and his son as leading lives, if not of villainy, of something bordering upon it. I hope it is needless to say that I do not agree with them, and that I hold, in fact, precisely the opposite opinion. In referring to this, my sole purpose is to warn Dr. Foote, Jr., of the tyrannical attitude which he takes when he advocates the imprisonment of non-invasive persons whom he happens to consider dangerous. The letter which he has just written might have been penned by Anthony Comstock himself; even its phraseology is Comstockian. It forces me to look upon its author, much to my regret, as another Comstock, not yet in power. T.

The Abuse of Free Speech.

Is it an "abuse" of free speech to use harsh, stinging expressions in criticism of an act deemed pernicious or teaching deemed false? Is it wrong to use invective, call hard names, or indulge in bitter and fiery denunciation? In a recent issue of Liberty I asked Mrs. Ellen Battelle Dietrick to justify her characterization of intemperate speech (on the part of prohibitionists and religious fanatics) as an "abuse of free speech," assuming that, as a believer in equal liberty, she advocates the perfect *freedom* of speech. In defence of her position, Mrs. Dietrick argues as follows in a private letter, from which she allows me to quote.

"Abuse" is literally "wrong use." There is as much social necessity for the distinctive epithets "right" and "wrong" as there is for the epithets "inch" and "ell." Of course, if one is entirely alone upon an island, no distinction between right use and wrong use of freedom in speech is needed. But in society such distinction serves as an oil to the wheels of thought-exchange.

The only object human beings can have in exchange of ideas is to obtain mutual profit or pleasure. The person who conceives that his ideas are superior (and this is every person) is naturally impelled to impart these ideas to others; and, when his conceptions are really superior to those of others, great profit ensues to society when these obtain a wide hearing and acceptance. But, as the human mind is exactly like an oyster in one respect, great tact is essential in establishing legitimate exercise of freedom of speech. Each person mentally separates himself from his business or occupation, probably as the oyster mentally distinguishes himself from his shell. If he be a moderately fair-minded and tolerably well-instructed person, he will often consent to listen while you point out to him the anti-social tendencies in his business or occupation, or even in his political and religious principles, though here you approach extremely sensitive ground.

Now, there seems to be no longer room to doubt that the use of strong intoxicants is a constant menace to the human brain. If people living in the physically-weakening and intellect-exciting environment of modern life are to use stimulants at all, it is manifest that these should be made milder in quality and be consumed more moderately. To point out these facts to both dealers in, and consumers of, strong liquors is a legitimate use of freedom of speech, because it conduces to the establishment of better ideas than now prevail among topers and liquor dealers. But a volley of vituperation directed against the liquor-dealer himself is like a blow on the shell of an oyster from a brother oyster. He merely retires into his shell, angry and resentful. You have misused, or abused, speech, because your use of speech has defeated your object in speaking, which was to gain an improvement in the liquor business. But not only does such abuse concentrated upon the liquor-dealer fail to leaven him with better ideas; it does still more harm by diverting public attention from the real culprits, — the topers, — and by turning it upon the innocent ministers to the topers' appetite.

All "education" is a living proof that human beings can be persuaded to genuinely desire better things than mankind knew in its rude, coarse estate. All attempt to force human beings into better things is monumental failure of such effort at human improvement. Abuse of freedom of speech is force. A word often has the physical effect of a blow. The greatest libertarian would hardly intentionally advocate such a use of words as would simply so cut a person's self-respect that physical suffering closed the mind to further desire to argue, or to listen to arguments, in behalf of reasonableness.

When a word causes the heart to beat quickly, the blood to rush to the head painfully, the throat to contract convulsively, and even has power to wring tears from the eyes, we have clear and positive proof that there has been abuse of freedom of speech, for we talk, not to punish, but to convince each other. When fair words convince us that we have been in the wrong, our own minds punish us, and we are then justly punished. Abusive speech merely makes us suffer what we feel to be injustice.

It seems to me that this argument fails to draw the important distinction between abuses of freedom and offences against propriety or taste. Even if I could subscribe to everything that Mrs. Dietrick asseverates, I should not admit the conclusion that "the pouring forth of a vituperative volume of hatred" upon a given class of persons is an abuse of free speech; for in this phrase I use the term "abuse" as indicative of invasion. He alone is guilty of an abuse of freedom who oversteps the bounds fixed by the principle of equality of freedom and infringes the right of some other man. So long as one's acts do *not* amount to breaches of equal liberty, they must be recognized and described as entirely legitimate exercises of his rightful powers. To abuse free speech is to use it illegitimately and invasively; and, as we are entitled to proscribe and punish all invasive acts, it follows that those against whom the charge of abusing free speech is preferred are liable to be declared transgressors of equal liberty. I do not think Mrs. Dietrick means to go to such lengths. I think she will agree with the statement I made in my previous article that "we have a right to blame and condemn anything we deem pernicious, and no one may dictate to us the *language* to be used in our expressions of disapprobation or alarm." The right of criticism would be very shadowy indeed, if society could employ censors to regulate our modes of expression and prescribe or prepare legal "forms" for use in discussions. It would be absurd to say that, while a man ought to be allowed to call an opponent an ignoramus, he ought not to be allowed to call him a fool. Yet, if Mrs. Dietrick does not mean to advocate such arbitrary restriction of speech and criticism, what force and pertinence are there in her remark that "abuse of freedom of speech *is force*" (italics mine), and that a word often has the same physical effect as a blow? Force, a blow, we are agreed, can only be justified *by* the use of force in some form, and, if abuse of free speech *is* force, then it is to be interdicted and punished in all cases except those in which a prior use of force warranted it. If to call a man a fool, for example, is force, then the offender ought to be tried and punished, unless he can show that he used it in self-defence and as a matter of right.

No, words are not force, no matter what, in given cases, their effect may be. Boycotting often has the same effects as force, but it is not force. If effects are to be taken as the test, all distinctions between force and suasion, between coercion and passive resistance, are obliterated. There can be no abuse of free speech in the strict sense of the term, except, possibly, in case of libel or slander, on which differences of opinion still exist among libertarians. Mere criticism and denunciation, however harsh, cruel, biting, or undeserved, are not abuse, but legitimate exercise, of the freedom of speech.

Whether it is wise and profitable to indulge in intemperate and sweeping denunciation or "volumes of vituperative hatred" is another question, — a question which is as old as controversy and as far from settlement today as it ever was. In my opinion, it is useless to attempt to settle it on any general principle. So many factors enter into the problem, and so much allowance has to be made for the personal equation, that all generalizing must be dismissed as unsafe. Many have agreed in favor of moderate and mild methods, of the milk of human kindness, of self-restraint and charity, but few, I may say none, have ever been able to live up to these abstract propositions. There are times when argument is useless and invective appropriate and necessary. There are men who are impervious to logic and appeals, and who can be reached only by a word which has the effect of a blow. There are men with whom one's self-respect forbids to enter into argument, but who need to be "called down" in some effective way. There are occasions for the exhibition of wrathful indignation or of scornful contempt. Each must judge for himself, and each *does* judge for himself, with the result that, on the whole, when the differences in our respective opportunities, temptations, and provocations are taken into account, we are all equally prone to "sin." Even those who have posed as meek and lowly moral non-resistants, like Tolstoi, have belied their professions by systematic and wholesale use of

downright abuse and vituperation. It's in human nature, and you cannot indict the human race.

As for Mrs. Dietrick's contention that abuse inevitably defeats the very object of all human intellectual commerce, because it excites passion and prejudice, the obvious rejoinder is that very few disputants ever hope to produce any effect on their active opponents. Controversies hardly ever lead to agreement between those engaged in them, but the interested outsiders, the by-standers, frequently derive real instruction from the discussion, and are aided in arriving at settled opinions. It is chiefly, if not wholly, for the benefit of these listeners or readers that controversies are entered upon. Of course, if it could be shown that abuse alienates and disgusts impartial outsiders, Mrs. Dietrick's case would be completely made out; but the evidence is against such a theory. For the most part, abuse is resented and frowned upon by third persons only when it appears to them to be gratuitous and unjust, and what they resent in these instances is, not the abuse, but the injustice. Provided one feels thoroughly justified in employing the weapons of abuse and ridicule, there is no occasion to apprehend displeasure from the by-standers. Be just and fear not, is the safest rule; and certainly Mrs. Dietrick will not contend that abuse or contemptuous treatment is necessarily unjust.

Generosity in controversy, like generosity in other things, is not always a virtue. It is not always wise to avoid giving pain and to suppress wrath or impatience. There is, alas! a good deal of ignorance, hypocrisy, and mendacity in the world, and with these every self-respecting man must be at war. V. Y.

The Main Point First, Please.

It is noticeable that Mr. A. W. Wright, in replying in another column to my criticisms in No. 313 upon his financial views, pays absolutely no attention to the principal point that I made. Agreeing with him that public confidence is essential to the usefulness of paper money, I pointed out that nothing so tends to destroy confidence in redeemable paper money as to pledge its immediate redemption in coin, unless the ability to fulfil this pledge be guaranteed by the maintenance of a coin reserve equal to the paper issued, — a condition, of course, whose observance would cancel the principal motive for the issue of the paper, — and that confidence is only to be maintained by promising less, and satisfying the public that the promise will be kept; in other words, that people will more readily accept an adequately secured promise to pay at a time specified than an inadequately secured promise to pay on demand. In this lies the *essence* of my criticism upon Mr. Wright. *He ignores it altogether.* He contents himself with saying that no money is as certainly redeemable as that which is immediately redeemable. Which, of course, is true if the money *is, in fact*, immediately redeemable. But if it is not; if it is only an inadequately secured promise to immediately redeem, — then it is not as certain of redemption as is a perfectly secured promise to redeem at maturity. Now, as I showed that paper professing to be immediately redeemable must be either inadequately secured — *i. e.*, not necessarily immediately redeemable *in fact* — or else incapable of fulfilling its chief purpose, it is no answer at all to declare — what everybody knows — that no money is as certain of redemption as that which is immediately redeemable in fact.

It is just here that the issue lies between Mr. Wright and myself. It is incumbent upon him to prove that it is possible, otherwise than by maintaining a dollar-for-dollar coin reserve, to have a paper currency, professedly redeemable in coin on demand, which will surely hold the public confidence in the face of evidence that coin is being cornered. When he proves this, I will acknowledge that my criticism was without foundation, and with him I will favor the issue of demand notes only. If he fails to prove this, he, on the other hand, must abandon his theory that demand notes inspire public confidence. Then, but not before, I will discuss with him whether paper money redeemable at maturity can be guarded against the danger of unsecured issues; whether it would lead to a harmful redundancy of currency; and whether adequate security could be provided for it except at a cost that would outweigh the advantage. These points, raised by Mr. Wright, have their importance, but cannot be considered until the main point is settled. I call him back to the question. Mr. Wright's article is an attack upon the sort of money that I favor. Such an attack is not in order prior to a successful defence against my attack upon the sort of money that he favors.

In his original paper Mr. Wright did not make it clear whether he favored a legal limitation of bank issues, and whether he denied the right of enforcement of contract to banker and borrower contracting upon a basis of the former's limited liability. He now makes it clear that he favors perfect freedom in both of these particulars, so that here I have no further reason to complain of him.

Moreover, all that he says regarding the unfitness of the State for carrying on a banking business so thoroughly commands my approval that it is hardly worth while to discuss his distinction between the special and the general reasons that incapacitate the State. It is sufficient to remark that all the reasons which he classes as special I class as general. T.

From Single Tax to ——?

I am glad that Dr. Slobo-Yarros is disposed to force Mr. George A. Schilling to account for the muddled condition of his brain. Observation of his course for a year past has been a matter of much interest to me. A year ago, when I was in Europe, I saw in an American paper that at a national conference of labor bureau officials from the various States the Illinois representative had introduced a resolution providing for the appointment of a committee to investigate the advisability of laying a tax upon land values, and I said to myself: "Hello! what's up with Schilling?" It was but a few days later that I received a clipping from a Chicago paper, consisting of a letter written by Schilling in criticism of Liberty for presuming to criticise the Single Tax, and stating in plain terms that Liberty might be in better business. Then I knew what was up with Schilling. He had become a Single Taxer. And I made the further remark to myself: "Now we shall see what else he will become."

And we have seen.

He has become a believer in the natural existence of the State apart from the creation of man (having divinely-ordained authority, I presume, since Schilling believes in God), and attributes to it rights which he denies to man himself, — for instance, the right to punish for invasion.

He has become a victim of the disease known as the banana-skin-terror, which is a generic term for obsession of the mind by perpetual consciousness of the petty dangers that confront the individual in his daily life, accompanied by a believer's confidence (and Schilling is a famous believer) that these dangers vanish by a process of exorcism as soon as the State waves its magic wand.

He has become a prohibitionist, who tries to deceive himself into believing that he saves the doctrine of liberty by securing to towns the privilege of local option, forgetting — what he once would have remembered — that liberty can be saved only by localizing the option in the individual himself.

And, latest of all, though undoubtedly there are further developments in store, he has become an advocate of State suppression of obscene literature. This phase of his evolution was made apparent at the dinner of the Chicago Sunset Club on February 14, 1895, at which the subject of "Crusades against Vice" was discussed, the two leading disputants being Rev. Carlos Martyn and Mr. Victor Yarros. Mr. Yarros was not looking for support, in the discussion that followed, from any of those present except Mr. Schilling. To his surprise he received warm and able support from Mr. A. W. Wright and opposition from Mr. Schilling. The subject of obscene literature having arisen, Mr. Schilling put this question to Mr. Yarros: "Has a father the right to prevent obscene books passing into the hands of his child?" Receiving an affirmative answer, he asked further: "Then have not all the fathers a similar right to come together in the municipality, or in the State, or as individuals in a society, and protest in the form of a law against any one practising the same thing that they each, individually, protect their children against?" This equals the error of logic in the matter of equal liberty of which I convict Dr. Foote, Jr., in another column, with this at least in Dr. Foote's favor, — that he never has been an Anarchist, while Mr. Schilling *has* (in belief, though not accepting the name). Mr. Yarros, in his answer, drew the distinction between the right to prohibit the child from reading certain books and the right to prohibit their sale, affirming the former and denying the latter. It is a valid and important distinction, but does not, it seems to me, confront the exact point of Mr. Schilling's question as given in the official report of the discussion. Whatever the thought that lay in his mind, his question as reported implies the argument that, because an individual father has a right to prohibit his own children from reading certain books, all fathers collectively have a right to impose this prohibition upon all children collectively and upon those who would supply the children. Which, of course, is true, if we grant the assumption which Mr. Schilling works into his second question, — that each father actually wishes to prohibit his own children from reading the

book — but which otherwise is as clearly false. Mr. Schilling's first question premises only the right of the individual father to prohibit, which implies of course his equal right to *permit*. It did not premise at all that each individual father does prohibit, or wishes to prohibit, as a fact, and only with such a premise does the conclusion implied in the second question follow. And it is by such an argument as this that a whilom Anarchist would justify majority rule!

Thus we see the sad end to which a man may come by accepting the Single Tax. All the tyrannies hang together. T.

Mr. Traubel tells us in the "Conservator" that he would have "no competitions in trade, no elements divisional or compulsory operating anywhere." The mere absence of compulsory elements would not constitute a guarantee against competitions and divisional elements, and their existence is by no means an unmixed evil. No competitions in trade means perfect communism, and perhaps Mr. Traubel would have perfect voluntary communism. But, alas! he would not get rid of divisional elements even then, for intellectually and temperamentally men would be different and would think and act differently within very wide limits. Mr. Traubel also says that he would have all questions open until *all* men had closed them. Now, if this meant simply that he would grant people the freedom to discuss and question accepted doctrines without threatening to close anything in the sense in which tyrannical governments declare questions finally settled, there would be nothing original or striking in the statement. But it means more; it means that Mr. Traubel would regard no question settled in a scientific sense until all men had settled it in the same way, for he makes the remark in reply to a correspondent who regrets that Mr. Traubel has manifested a certain sympathy with anti-vivisection views, and who tells him that vivisection has passed the experimental stage and been firmly established. It is certainly no answer to such an assertion to say that *some* men still challenge vivisection, for there is hardly a scientific proposition which some men do not dispute. A question is not "open" in a scientific sense because some men have not solved it. Some men still believe that the earth does not move, but the question is not "open." To keep all questions open in Mr. Traubel's sense is to deny the possibility of scientific proof. He evidently confuses the political sense with the scientific. To punish men for heresy or ignorance would be a political closing of questions, which freedom forbids. To call a man a fool for holding absurd opinions is a scientific closing of questions against which liberty has nothing to say. The question whether water boils at a temperature of two hundred and twelve degrees is a closed question. Any one desiring to dispute the fact should be perfectly free to do so. But no individual's denial of it should cause other men to entertain the least doubt on the subject, and no one should be expected to turn aside from other matters in order to listen to this denial and weigh it. It must be admitted, on general grounds, that there is always the bare possibility that the individual making this or any other denial or affirmation may be right, and that the fools are those who accept the seemingly-established opinion. But where this happens once, the contrary happens thousands of times; and, as "the end of man is an action, not a thought," it will not do to bring all the steam-engines to a standstill in order that we may wonder whether the man who denies that water boils may not be right, after all. There is only one rule to follow in this matter. Accept nothing unless it appeals to your reason, whether it be proclaimed by all or by one, by the expert or the tyro; but, having arrived at a conclusion by means of your reason, do not be unsettled merely because some one else doubts or denies. Force the innovator to bombard you with reasons in order to gain your attention; otherwise, heed him not.

Oscar Wilde's plays, it is reported, are about to make their reappearance in the London theatres, and the author's name is not to be omitted from the programmes or announcements. This is one of the most cheering and significant symptoms of progress that we "degenerates" have welcomed in recent years. To poor Nordau and his American editorial chorus it must appear that the whole world is going to the devil. What! Wilde's plays and Wilde's name paraded before the good and virtuous middle classes of England, in spite of jury, verdict, prison, and editorial curses, and in utter disregard of the feelings of the British matron, the young person, the innocent boy and girl, and the respectable shopkeeper! The audacity of the thing takes one's breath away.

A good deal of pith has been found by many in Mrs. Stanton's remark that "women are riding to suffrage on the bicycle." In a sense this is doubtless true. Bicycle and bloomer women will not be influenced very much by the nonsense about the "sphere of women" and the danger of their unsexing themselves. But those who imagine that there is any analogy between the right to ride bicycles and the right to coerce others by voting exhibit extreme superficiality, and the woman-suffragists may congratulate themselves on the certainty of speedy victory if their antagonists are nonplussed by such sophistical remarks as that of Mrs. Stanton.

A number of leading prohibitionists are in favor of abolishing all liquor license laws as a preliminary to a successful campaign against the saloon. The government's interest in the revenue of the saloon they regard as the chief obstacle to prohibition. While Liberty would be glad to coöperate with them in securing the abolition of all restrictions upon free trade in rum, and would watch with considerable curiosity their subsequent endeavor to impose absolute prohibition on a people familiar with absolute freedom in that field, it must point out to them that their position is very illogical. Taxation and restriction are simply incomplete prohibition, and, if complete prohibition is good, partial prohibition cannot be bad. To tax is to prohibit; the higher the tax, the more prohibitive it is, and it is possible to secure the results aimed at by the theoretical prohibitionists by simply raising the tax on liquor to a point beyond anybody's ability to pay. Do they expect that they can induce the government to give up its revenue from liquor? If so, it is certainly easier to wipe out the saloon by raising the tax than by passing laws against it.

Anarchist Letter-Writing Corps.

The Secretary wants every reader of Liberty to send in his name for enrolment. Those who do so thereby pledge themselves to write, when possible, a letter every fortnight, on Anarchism or kindred subjects, to the "target" assigned in Liberty for that fortnight, and to notify the secretary promptly in case of any failure to write to a target (which it is hoped will not often occur), or in case of temporary or permanent withdrawal from the work of the Corps. All, whether members or not, are asked to lose no opportunity of informing the secretary of suitable targets. Address, STEPHEN T. BYINGTON, 108 W. 13th St., New York City.

A member of the Corps writes, "I observe the suggestion made as to sending Mr. Tucker's name to our targets, but I think a better one would be to send a copy of Liberty to each target. Then the recipient will know just where the shots come from, and can also note the literature that is advertised." I hardly think so. Better not let the recipient know how the shots came to be sent. Many will guess more or less clearly that they are being attacked by an organized body, and there is probably no good in trying to blind them artificially; but, if they are ready to think that your letters are individually spontaneous, better let them think so.

I would add that it is not every letter that can profitably have a recommendation of Tucker's literature inserted. But I think the best letters are generally such as make the Anarchistic point so strongly, positively, and definitely that the recommendation of literature will go well with them. Cohen objects to many of the letters he has received because they "are generalizations and do not go to the heart of the question in detail." Generalizations are easy and pleasant writing, but they have little convincing power; and, even when you have got a man to assent to a generalization, you have not yet got him ready to make any particular practical application of it.

A parallel fault is that of merely pointing out an opponent's error in some unimportant detail, not coming to the heart of the question at all. This also is easy and pleasant writing, but kills very little game. This is what is especially likely to give no fair opportunity for recommending Anarchist literature; a letter of pointless generalization may take in a recommendation of literature well enough, and that may be the only useful point in it.

Both faults lead to the result that your letter seems to have been written from the standpoint of conservative individualism; whatever effect you produce goes to the benefit of that cause, and whatever a reader knows of the weakness of that cause is brought forward in his mind as an argument against you. The only way to avoid this is to make some practical application of your principle, bolder than the conservative individualist dares make.

A collection of my own Corps letters would show many examples of both faults. I shall probably commit them again when I feel lazy; but the less I do this, the better I shall like myself.

Target, section A. — Bolton Hall, 111 Broadway, New York City, writes me, "I have printed, I think, all the Anarchist letters on Taxation. I could use some more." He adds several particular lines on which he would like letters, of which the first is "those aiming to show how Anarchist principles would obviate the necessity of resorting to taxation to prevent land monopoly." Give him letters on this point.

Section B. — "The Farmer's Voice," 334 Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill., a Populist paper which has been strongly advocating coöperation by farmers in the way of mutual insurance, coöperative buying and selling, etc., while standing for an exclusive government currency. In the number for June 22, J. T. Small has a letter making a very clear and strong argument for the mutual system of banking as a development of the coöperative principle. He specially emphasizes the point that it is really the customers' credit that gives the security on which bank notes depend. Endorse Small; prove the practicability of mutual banking and its efficiency in furnishing good money and breaking down monopoly; show its special points of superiority to government currency.

STEPHEN T. BYINGTON.

An Age of Law.

[Chicago Post.]

The time is coming very soon when all affairs of life,
From matters of importance to the little household strife,
We'll find are regulated on a plan without a flaw,
And every thought and action is provided for by law.

By law we do our working, and by law we have to shave;
The law will haunt us living, and will follow to the grave.
The matter of the barbers must have been a problem vexed.
But, now that it is settled, why, the question is: What next?

It looks as if in time to come by law we'll have to cook,
And, if we want to read a bit, the law will name the book;
In planning for vacations, too, by law we will be led:
By law we'll do our eating, and by law we'll go to bed.

By law we'll do our talking, as will, too, the parson preach;
We'll bar all forms of learning, then, but what the law may teach.
By law we'll do our courting, and by law we'll even sigh;
By law we'll live, and grow, and fight, and love, and even die.

The law will lay down rules for us for every little thing;
We'll have to see a lawyer, if we even want to sing;
And yet it may be possible — the thought must make us pause —
The trouble is at present that we have too many laws.

Liberty Run Wilde.

To the Editor of Liberty:

Your editorial on "The Criminal Jailers of Oscar Wilde" denounces his imprisonment as "an outrage that shows how thoroughly the doctrine of liberty is misconstrued." Following this, you speak of his "sole offence" as a matter which concerned himself only. If so, I got a very wrong view of the case in court, and what he was tried for. As I understand it, he was not tried and convicted on any charge of committing an "unnatural crime," but on the charge of seducing others to his evil ways. One who may deprecate any interference with the liberty of a woman to dispose of her person as she chooses, for love or money, might nevertheless advocate criminal prosecution of a procuress, especially one who sought new victims among the very young.

This is the crime of Oscar Wilde, as I see it, and for which he is now serving his term of two years, unless I am much mistaken. He confesses to being greatly attracted to youth, though denying any such serious accusation as he was indicted for; but one who has any knowledge of men of his class well knows that one of their worst points is the disposition to seek out and make new victims of promising youth. This is made evident in their own confessions as quoted in Krafft-Ebing's "Psychopathia Sexualis." In it a long chapter is given to "urnings," a study of their peculiarities and how they come to be. Some almost seem to be proud of their perversity, and as anxious to make converts as the advocates of the most innocent fads or fancies. In the story of "The Picture of Dorian Grey," by Wilde himself, the same propensity forms a large element of the story, and offers a valuable moral lesson as to the danger of evil associations that corrupt good manners, while it further shows that the "hero" becomes utterly lost to all propriety and morality, and suicides at last as a complete physical and moral wreck. One who reads that story since the fall of Wilde can hardly escape the belief that it is largely autobiographical, and, so thinking, could even wish his sentence were twenty, instead of two, years.

Rev. Mr. Headlam hopes Wilde may "yet recover his spirit and do good work for the world." To me this seems incredible — hopeless. If Wilde be not a victim of incurable insanity, his record must bar the way to any reform. One can no more reasonably hope for reform and useful life in him than in Dorian Grey after he had slain his friend and victim. The story carried him along to the only possible end of such a life, — self obliteration.

If the logic of equal liberty and personal freedom can sanction keeping hands off from such as Wilde and Taylor so long as they revel only in their own debasement, it can hardly justify the let-alone policy when they set up shop to increase the "cult" of this sort of æsthetic culture; for they are not at all satisfied to find each other out (among the perverts of the same taste), but they are "hell-bent" on discovering fresh, virile, healthy, vigorous, and unsophisticated young men of whom to make victims for vampires. You may say that youth should be so instructed and trained as to be safe against the wily, seductive attractions of even such glittering genius as that of Wilde, and so say I; but, if State interference is permissible anywhere, it is against this vicious invasion of the family, which lures to destruction the finest specimens of manhood; and if the State have no function in this matter, it will also have to let alone the marquis who uses a gun against his son's "uncle." As to this particular son, very likely you can fairly retort that he was old enough to mind his own business, including his most private affairs, but men of the Taylor-Wilde type don't recognize any youthful age limit, and boys are their constant prey.

Those who admit any sphere for the State will also find good reason for its laying a curbing and confining hand on urnings, as upon insane of any dangerous kind. Heredity is admittedly a large factor in their production, and, contrary to what might be expected of such perverts, they are prone to marry and beget. So one of Wilde's greatest sins against his race was the fathering of some boys who look like him, paralleled only by his second crime against them of so conducting himself as to give them a public stamp of opprobrium. If such perverts would have sense and decency enough to avoid propagating their kind and abstain from attempting to drag down the children of other families to their own unfortunate level, the rest of mankind might well be content to keep hands off, let them live out their lives, and enjoy the equal liberty of the pursuit of happiness in their own way, — in short, "let the dead bury their dead." But they can't and won't keep to themselves, and so a few — too few — get their deserts.

Our own late example is simply another evidence of what I say. "Dr." Tonner gets two and a half years, not for any vice peculiar to himself and his own individual liberty, but for being caught in the attempt to inveigle another, and to procure a fresh victim for his patrons, or patron for his bagnio. The judge who sentenced him said, if he had any friends in the medical profession, they should institute an examination as to his sanity. Whatever the decision of experts may be as to the sanity or insanity of such men, the best place for them, perhaps even for their own sake, and certainly for the rest of society, is either in prison or an insane asylum.

Should this letter draw your fire, I hope you will not stop short of instructing your class in liberty as to what would be done, under liberty, with the varied assortment of sexual perverts who make a nuisance of themselves to more decent folks, from the librarian, aged fifty-one, just caught in Prospect Park trying to seduce little girls to the ways of prostitutes, to Jack-the-Ripper, who no doubt found a similar satisfaction in his murderous acts.

E. B. Foote, Jr., M. D.

Oscar Wilde's Imprisonment.

[Octave Mirbeau in Le Journal.]

A few days ago "Le Gaulois" described the frightful daily torture which the unfortunate Oscar Wilde is forced to undergo in his prison. This account, not written to excite sympathy and having all the swift and impersonal abruptness of a legal document, haunts one like a tale of Edgar Poe; it inspires the same terror, aggravated by the knowledge that it is not a piece of literary fiction, but a statement of the truth. Never did any crime, however atrocious, cause me to shudder with horror as does this punishment. This account carries one back beyond the century, to a distant and barbarous time, — to those gloomy middle ages whose master-pieces have not been able to wipe out the red stain of torture or dissipate the odor of flesh roasting at the stake. The vision of this unfortunate, and of a thousand other martyrs more obscure, turning the wheel of torture in constant terror of the death that will be theirs if, at the end of their strength and courage, they stop turning for a moment, obsesses me like a frightful nightmare. And nothing is lacking, not even the shaven face of the clergyman, replacing the hooded monk, who comes every day to talk to these suffering beings of the justice of men and the goodness of God. Oh, this clergyman! He is to be found wherever there are blood and tears. He is the same personage who in the colonies presides over massacres, Bible in hand, sanctifies tortures, legalizes depredations, covers with his crapulous coat the work of grim destruction and abominable conquest that will be later the shame of this time. The monks of Cortes and Pizarro have not altered. They have simply taken off their woolen gowns and put on shining coats.

How can it be that physical torture, such as that of which Oscar Wilde is a victim, is still tolerated in the judicial customs of today? When one reflects a little, one is frightened at the thought that this dark corner of social life has not yet been penetrated by the progress which has changed so many things less necessary to human enfranchisement. In England especially is this astonishing. In walking the streets of London you are impressed more than anywhere else with the real existence of progress. There the modern trend toward individual liberty is most apparent. Authority hides itself. All the more striking, then, is the contrast between this liberty and the violent barbarism practised in the prisons.

One day, when I was philosophizing upon these questions with an Englishman, he said to me:

"You wonder at our civilization, and at the sentiment of individual liberty so deeply rooted in us. Yes, that is the general impression which visitors carry away from London, of which they see but the surface. These qualities, which strike you so forcibly, are rather race characteristics than the products of a more rational social order. The laws go for nothing in this matter. You must not see, in that which you admire in us, anything more than a manifestation of our egoism. For we are no better than other peoples, and our political institutions are not, in essence, superior to yours. All States are equally good at bottom, — that is, good for nothing, — and all weigh upon man with the same crushing weight, north, south, east, and west. In the matter of Oscar Wilde and his sentence, — yes, for a moment, we were astounded. We had almost forgotten what the words, 'hard labor,' meant. There has been but one opinion expressed, which may be summed up thus: 'It is abominable! It is a remnant of old barbaric customs; it must be changed at any price, for the honor of civilization.' And then, this tribute paid to pity, the matter was forgotten, and will not again be thought of until some new event shall come to again remind us that 'hard labor' really exists and must be changed. Alas! it exists everywhere, as well in Russia as in Germany, France, and Italy. The form of the torture differs with the country, but, believe me, human suffering does not lose a single cry or a single drop of blood. And the curious thing is that progress has made itself felt everywhere save in the department of justice. All the social organs have been more or less improved, with the exception of the judicial organ, in which the soul of barbarous days and the madness of the ancient violences practised upon the human personality remain intact and respected. See, for instance, in France, your examining magistrate, with his sovereign powers, his formidable authority, counterbalanced by no check, by no responsibility! Is he not a monstrosity, a permanent defiance of the very Justice which he incarnates? Are not the methods which he employs to wring confession from those whom he supposes or *wishes* to be guilty almost always clear offences or even crimes? Do they not remind one of the old-time tortures, and are they not in reality an application, moral at any rate and often physical, of the abolished rites of the Inquisition? We must have the courage to say it, and to repeat it. Judge though he be, a judge is a man, like the rest of us. Perhaps even more so than the rest of us, more liable, through his calling, to the temptations and follies that make of him a deformed creature, a maniac, a *delinquent*, as the philosophers say. One of my friends, a very famous physician, had once an opportunity to study the brain of a judge who, during his life, had passed for a man

admirable in his art, of superior integrity, of lucid intelligence. Well, in that brain he discovered profound lesions, such as are observed only in the most hardened criminals; he found unquestionable traces of terrible mania. Think of all the crimes that this man was able to commit with impunity! And it may yet be centuries and centuries before the reforms deemed necessary will be attempted and our judicial system be brought into conformity with the new conditions of life."

And as I asked him more particularly his opinion as to Oscar Wilde, the Englishman simply answered:

"Oscar Wilde will serve his term, the whole of it. For what he has committed is not a crime, or even an offence; it is a sin."

Money and the Law.

To the Editor of Liberty:

I desire opportunity to answer a criticism of my paper on "Banking and the State," which appeared in Liberty of May 18, and to which my friend Tucker takes some exceptions under the head of "Where Wright is Wrong."

The first exception is to my contention that it is of great importance that paper money should be subject to immediate redemption. Mr. Tucker says that "certainty of ultimate redemption" is an essential, but that immediate redemption is not. Now, it seems to me that the only possible way of making ultimate redemption sure is to insist upon immediate redemption in that medium which possesses in the highest degree all of the essential attributes of money. Without that condition an important and proper check upon the banker would be removed. There would be a constant temptation to issue bills without proper security. Paper money is a credit, — simply a promise to pay real money. In order that it may most efficiently perform its office, it is essential that it be regarded with the highest confidence. Confidence is a thing of growth, and it can grow only with opportunity; and opportunity, with the bill-holder, means that he must have a chance to frequently test the ability of the banker to redeem his promise to pay. Whenever a man receives a piece of paper on which is printed a promise to pay money, he has a right to an immediate knowledge as to whether that promise is good or not; the only way in which he can know is by demanding immediate redemption and having the demand satisfied. Another thing: if paper money is at all times redeemable on demand, there never can be a redundancy of money; as soon as the volume exceeds the demand in the slightest degree, it will return to the author of its existence, and demand the redemption to which it is entitled. The reason that paper money was thought of and came into use was and is because of economy. Paper money costs almost nothing. Every device for safeguarding bill-holders against loss will add to the cost of paper money, and, when the point of absolute security is reached, all the credit features are eliminated, and the paper money costs its face in real money, and sometimes even more than that. The bills of issue of our national banks afford an illustration, the expense of security costing more than the face of the note. The demand for money is subject to fluctuation; it is greater at some seasons of the year than at others, and greater some years than other years; therefore it is essential that paper may come into existence in response to demand, and must go out of existence when the demand is satisfied and therefore ceases. Immediate redemption is the regulating agency that can be had without adding to the cost of the machinery used. Immediate redemption is a limitation, of course, but it is natural, and not arbitrarily imposed; it is, therefore, in harmony with free banking.

Paper money rests upon the sense of right and wrong, not upon security. Without intelligence sufficient to properly recognize and appreciate this fact, paper money is impossible. Every restriction other than natural limitations will obstruct rather than aid. Paper money has come into existence in recognition of economic law; it is a time- and labor-saving device; its function in smaller transactions is the same as that of the draft and bills of exchange in larger transactions, — *i. e.*, the avoidance of the expense incident to the keeping on hand at all times of large amounts of cumbrous metallic money and the changing of the same from hand to hand at the close of every transaction. To properly fulfil the office of money, paper bills of issue must be redeemable at once in that medium; that, in the estimation of the holder of such paper bills, comes the nearest to possessing all of the attributes of real money. A time limit would destroy an essential requisite. Real money is at all times instantly available. Paper promises to pay real money, to properly fill the office of a cheap substitute for money, must be redeemable on demand; this is an essential condition, because it is a natural condition.

I did say that "banks should be permitted to issue paper money equal to their unimpaired capital," but I did not mean that there should be a limit at that point, though I confess that it might be considered that such limitation was implied. A good banker will always insist upon the borrower and user of the credit depositing sufficient security to guarantee its redemption at maturity, so that no limitation as to the amount of bills that he may issue, and for the redemption of which he has assumed liability, is necessary.

Now, as to the unlimited liability of the banker, I think there should be no limit to his liability, because there would naturally be none. He is the self-appointed conservator of common funds, a self-constituted dealer in money and credit, and for his services he charges a fee in the shape of interest and exchange. He performs no gratuitous service. While it is true that he usually furnishes some capital of his own, it is not necessary, for the bank is always in reality its line of deposits. So long as he conducts the bank upon sound banking principles, failure is utterly impossible, inasmuch as nothing can go wrong unless the banker fails to properly perform his duties. He should be liable for and make good every loss. He charges a fee, — that is, he enjoys benefits from his acts; he should therefore accept all the responsibilities incident to his actions. I am not denying the right of individuals limiting their liabilities in relation to each other, but I am denying the right of the State to limit the liability of the banker, allowing him to escape the liability that fairly belongs to his vocation. Unlimited liability is the natural condition; it requires an arrangement of some kind imposed by the State to enable the banker to escape it; therefore unlimited liability is right, because it is natural, and can be avoided only by artificial device. I do not think there should be any favors shown the banker by law, nor should there be any laws that are to his disadvantage; there should be freedom limited only by natural conditions.

It seems to me that there are a great many special reasons why the State should not engage in a banking business, just as there are special reasons why the State should not engage in the carrying of the mail and the conduct of post offices, or the conducting of public schools and arbitrarily obliging people to pay the expense thereof. There are special reasons that apply only to each of these several things, aside from the general reason that it is not a proper function of the government to attempt in any way the promotion of the public welfare. The sole function of government is the protection of individuals from the aggressions of each other. Whenever the government attempts to do too many things, or too much of any one thing, it fails to properly perform the governmental office that is essential. It is possible that the State might engage in a banking business without invading individual right, but it is not at all probable that it would do so, and in the case of the United States there has most certainly been such invasion.

Any business undertaking can most certainly be more economically conducted by private enterprise than it can be through the exercise of governmental agencies. This fact alone is a sufficient reason why the State should not engage in a banking business. There would not and could not be exercised the discriminating intelligence on the part of governmental bank managers in the way of negotiating loans and always exacting proper and sufficient security for the same that is at all times absolutely essential to the safe and proper conduct of the business; then, too, there are innumerable political objections that might be urged against a governmental banking system, such as the giving of improper credit to political favorites or withholding credit from political opponents; it could be used to reward friends and to punish enemies of the officials connected with the bank. No such powerful engine for mischief should be thought of for a moment in a democratic republic.

A. W. WRIGHT.

Another Case of Doubting Politician.

To the Editor of Liberty:

Mr. Labadie's letter in Liberty a few months ago, in answer to a doubting friend, was of peculiar interest to me. I also have a very good friend who objects to the so-called "extreme deductions" which we draw from the principle of equal freedom. This friend, I am sorry to say, is George A. Schilling, who needs no introduction to Liberty. He has tried to convince me of the unsoundness of our position on certain questions.

I am very anxious that some of the ablest representatives should throw more light on this subject, for Mr. Schilling's benefit, as well as for the benefit of others, who seem to stop short in their deductions, for some strange reason. I hope that it is due only to the lack of logic.

Let me state the substance of some of our discussions in the form of a dialogue between two friends.

Failure number one.

First Friend. I can't go as far as some of you Anarchists do. I don't see my way clear. I don't believe a person has a right to constitute himself sheriff and executioner, as some of you assert.

Second Friend. Why not?

First Friend. Because it is dangerous to allow an interested person to perform such functions. At one time, in the early period of civilization, there prevailed such arrangements, and the result was that a great many outrageous injustices were committed.

Second Friend. Who, then, is to perform these functions? A voluntary organization? I don't think any Anarchist will object to that. In fact, they recognize the necessity of such organization in order to economize time and labor. Still, if any person insist on performing those functions for himself, he must be given the right, or rather, he must not be prevented under the law of equal freedom. When you realize that present societies demand compensation for *these* services and usually fix their own prices too, allowing no competition in the market, I don't see how you fail to perceive the gross violation of the law of equal freedom.

First Friend. I don't see my way clear. I think we shall require some form of compulsory organization as long as people are not perfect. We cannot trust human nature.

Second Friend. And so you admit that you believe in violating the law in this case? [If I am not mistaken, my friend once admitted it.] I think that you exaggerate the gravity of the alleged evil of a person constituting himself sheriff and executioner. What does it really mean? It simply means that a person can, if he chooses, protect himself and his property, and, if necessary, take the punishment of trespassers on his person or property into his own hands.

You must not forget that, as the principles of justice are becoming clearer, and the law of equal freedom more intelligently recognized as the right basis of society, the number of citizens who are ever ready to protect the rights of others as well as their own and to enforce justice is constantly increasing. The invader, no matter whether he assumes the form of a sheriff and executioner or any other form, will be quickly recognized and punished. The necessity of carefully refraining from invasion will be felt greatly in such society, and this will go far to prevent invasion. To say that "in the early period of civilization we had such an arrangement" is absurd. How much did those people know about equal freedom or justice?

Failure number two.

My friend, too, seems to be troubled about the banana-peeling on the sidewalk. He does not think that persuasion, public opinion, or the boycott would do any good in this case. He, too, insists that we must have a law against it. And yet you should hear how ably he argues that the most complex social relations can be regulated without laws; how he shuns what an important part public opinion and the boycott will play in the future when we shall have fewer laws!

Failure number three.

First Friend. Either our children belong to us or they belong to society.

Second Friend. The children certainly don't belong to society. As long as parents support children, they

have certain rights over them, and to a certain extent they belong to them.

First Friend. Have parents a right to prevent a child from reading vile books?

Second Friend. Yes.

First Friend. And, since all fathers have a right to prohibit or prevent their children from reading such books, have not all fathers a right to come together and pass a law prohibiting the sale of such books?

Second Friend. Not at all. The conclusion does not follow from the premises. To prohibit the sale would be an invasion. The person selling the book does not compel your child to buy it, and still less to read it. He is therefore not an invader.

First Friend. He is invading my child's mind. You give me the right to protect my child, but deny me the proper means. To my mind it is a clear case of invasion, and I believe in prohibiting the sale of such books.

Second Friend. You are confused. Don't you see that by trying to sell any book a person exercises no compulsion? Where is the invasion and the crime?

First Friend. I know that you, too, will some day see these points as I do.

Second Friend. I shall be sorry for myself, because I shall then be as illogical as you are.

I hope that T. or some other competent writer will give another explanation of these peculiar phenomena than the one T. has already given in the case of the "Politician's Doubts." I should dislike to have to apply it to my friend's case.

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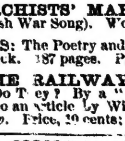

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